DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 147 833 CS 203 786

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TITLE Job Seekers: Instructor and Counselor.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (28th, Kansas City, Missouri, March 31-April 2, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Skills; Course Descriptions; Employment Interviews; Employment Qualifications; *Job Applicants; *Job Application; Jobs; *Job Search Methods; Post Secondary Education; *Technical Writing

ABSTRACT

This paper describes an instructional unit that prepares students as job seekers. The five-session instructional unit employs a team-teaching approach in which a technical writing instructor stresses format, content, and mechanics, and a counselor emphasizes decision making, intrapersonal communications, and interview techniques. The following areas are examined: values and goals, application letters and resumes, letters requesting references, mock interviews, follow-up letters, and letters to accept or reject job offers. A course outline and evaluation forms are included. (RL)

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Job Seekers: Instructor and Counselor

Carol H. Adams

The recent deluge of guides for resumé writing, letters of application, and interviews illustrates that communication skills are essential for the job search and/or job advancement. As a technical writing instructor, I have found during the last two years that I can more thoroughly develop a unit of job-seeking techniques in my Technical Report Writing course by team teaching with a counselor from Student Services. The instructor is concerned primarily with format, content, mechanics; the counselor emphasizes decision making, intra-personal communications, and interview techniques. Together the team attempts to develop communication skills and confidence for the student's job search.

In an informal environment, the following areas are examined:

1. values and goals
2. letter of application, resumé, (application form)
3. letter requesting references
4. mock interview
5. follow-up letter
6. letter to accept or reject a position

Presentations include group discussions, individualized modules, media, and personalized instruction. The scheduling of the units into the course varies according to class size and individual needs.

Usually the activities are grouped into five 50-minute sessions which meet at one-week intervals, but they can be adapted to almost any classroom situation and to almost any course. They also can be used interchangeably as written or oral assignments. Furthermore, the written activities are usually only introduced or assigned during the class period. Students work on the activities not only in class but also during the week between class meetings.

Students realize that diverse areas are concerned with developing proficient communication skills for the job market, and continuing feedback and revision are important between instructor, counselor, and student. The students add most of their written assignments from this unit to their folder in the college's Placement Office. Students improve their communication skills in job-seeking with the aid of the technical writing instructor and the counselor.

The following outline includes the basics of the unit. The rest is up to the instructor, the counselor, and the students. The goal is to familiarize students with job-seeking skills and to demonstrate the importance of these written and oral skills.

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Session I - Orientation

The counselor primarily conducts the sessions while the English instructor joins the students in class. Everyone participates. In the initial meeting we try to create a "low pressure," informal, relaxed environment. We primarily begin with oral activities and lead into written ones.

Initially, the student is given an overview of the five fifty-minute sessions. The counselor explains the benefits of the unit:

1. The student will develop specific writing skills about applying for a job.
2. The student will gain information about sources of job information.
3. The student will evaluate himself for the job market and the market for him.
4. The student will plan for the job interview.
5. The student will complete a job-seeker's portfolio for the Placement Office.

Activity 1 - Job Orientation Evaluation

Given questions about information and motivation, the student will consider what he has to offer an employer.

Information

1. What specific skills do I have for an employer?
2. What specific knowledge and practical experience do I have for an employer?

Motivational

1. Why do I want to work?
2. What do I want to be doing in one year? five years? ten years?
3. Are my personal philosophy of life and career choice compatible?

Activity 2 - Work Priority

Given the work priority sheet, the student will rank from highest (1) to lowest (10) their job priorities.

After the handout is completed, students should consider the following:

1. the reasons for their selections
2. the consequences of their choices (ways of limiting or improving their job potential)
3. the flexibility of each choice

Activity 3 - Life Line

Reviewing the years of his life, the student will make a life line from his first moment of recall to the present. On the line he should indicate "high" moments and "low" ones. The student should consider achievements, failures, contributions, and disappointments. These events should then be considered in view of what they indicate about the student's values and goals with regard to the job market.

Session II - Application Form

During this session, the counselor helps the applicant acquaint himself with what he wants in a place of employment. The group will discuss the characteristics of companies of varying sizes, in different locations, and with diverse types of organizations.

Activity 1 - Application Form

Having obtained an application form from an appropriate place of employment, the student will neatly complete the form without any mechanical errors.

Activity 2 - Job Exploration

Given the Job Exploration handout, the student will write a memorandum to his counselor about the company which he is considering for employment, obtaining 40 out of 50 points on the "Memorandum" evaluation form.

Session III - Letter of Application, Resumé, and Letter Requesting a Reference

As an orientation for this unit, the student is exposed to audio-visual materials, models, guidelines, and other sources of information on the preparation of the letters and resumé. A key ingredient in these assignments is "consider the audience." The instructor notes format, content, mechanics; the counselor comments on content, format, and employment trends. The English instructor finally grades the written assignments with the appropriate evaluation form, considering the input of the counselor. Coming from two different directions, we share, exchange, and discuss all angles, giving the students as many hints and suggestions as possible.

With names removed, "roughs," finished letters, and resumés are made into transparencies and shared in class discussions. The goal of this session is to inspire a little initiative and creativity in preparing these three products, as well as inform. The student learns to put his "best foot forward" as he begins his written job-seeking process.

Session IV - Mock Interview

Prior to the interview, the student will prepare a brief job description and give it to the counselor.

The counselor will either conduct the interviews individually or in pairs. In either case the interviews should be videotaped or at least tape recorded.

Individual Interviews

Given twenty minutes, the student will be interviewed by a technology or community representative or the counselor acting as an employment agent about his job description. He must obtain at least 80 of 100 points on the "Interview" evaluation form.

Pair Interviews

Given ten minutes, the student will interview a classmate about the classmate's job description. Then in ten minutes the student will assume the interviewee role and be interviewed about his job description. He must obtain at least 80 of 100 points on the "Interview" evaluation form.

Following the interview, the counselor and/or instructor will review the tape and discuss the session.

Session V - Letter to Follow-up an Interview
Letter to Accept or Refuse a Position

Too often the applicant completes no written communication following the interview. The letter to follow-up the interview and the letter to accept or refuse a position are important steps in completing the job-seeking process. These activities are indicators to the potential employer that the applicant has a thorough understanding of the communication skills involved in seeking employment.

Activity 1

The student will complete a letter to follow-up an interview receiving at least 40 out of 50 points on the "Letter" evaluation form.

Activity 2

The student will complete a letter to accept or refuse a position obtaining at least 40 out of 50 points on the "Letter" evaluation form.

Session VI - Evaluation

This final session is used to review and examine the job-seeking unit. The students also compile their resumé, letters of reference, and any other pertinent information for inclusion in the portfolio for the Placement Office. The instructor, counselor, and student conclude the unit knowing that the student is better prepared to meet the oral and written needs of the job search.

WORK PRIORITY

Rank the following in their order of importance to you in selecting a job. Place a "1" by the one of most importance and a "10" by the one of least importance. Rank the others accordingly.

_____ Salary

_____ Opportunity for advancement

_____ Type of work involved

_____ Location

_____ Availability of transportation

_____ Climate

_____ Type of city or town where company is located

_____ Quality of school available

_____ Availability of housing

_____ Fringe benefits

Job Exploration

1. Name and address of the company or organization.
2. Name of President, Personnel Manager, or other persons involved in hiring practices.
3. Purpose of the organization or business.
4. Present job openings.
5. Size of the organization.
6. Products and/or services.
7. Reputation.
8. Length of time in business.
9. Growth potential.
10. Salary ranges.
11. Employee benefits.

MEMORANDUM

Mechanics Usage	
punctuation & spelling -5 each	____
fragments & run-ons -5 each	____
diction, awkward phrasing, parallelism -3 each	____
pronoun agreement, subject, verb agreement, capitalization -1 each	____

Organization & Content +	_____
Mechanics & Usage -	_____
Total	_____
Rewrite Points	_____
Total	_____

Format - proper inclusion and punctuation of headings; inclusion of titles where necessary; initials or written signature.	10_____
Subject Line - capitalized; concise statement of purpose.	10_____
Body paragraphs - generated from subject line; concisely supported subject including all necessary information; appropriate presentation of lists where appropriate.	20_____
Concluding paragraph - states desired action or further action.	5_____
Appropriate tone	5_____
Total	50_____

D = 45-50
P = 40-44

LETTER OF APPLICATION

Mechanics Usage	
punctuation & spelling -5 each	____
fragments & run-ons -5 each	____
diction, awkward phrasing, parallelism -3 each	____
pronoun agreement, subject, verb agreement, capitalization -1 each	____

Organization & Content +	_____
Mechanics & Usage -	_____
Total	_____
Rewrite Points	_____
Total	_____

Correct Format	5_____
Introductory paragraph - short, stating how found out about job and that he is applying	10_____
Body paragraphs - present applicant's most appropriate qualifications for the specific job.	10_____
Concluding paragraph - request interview	5_____
Appropriate tone - avoid excessive use of "I" and avoid "cuteness" and boastfulness	10_____
Clarity	5_____
Paragraph conciseness	5_____
Total	50_____

D = 45-50
P = 40-44

Comments:

RESUME

Mechanics Usage	
punctuation & spelling -5 each	____
fragments & run-ons -5 each	____
diction, awkward phrasing, parallelism -3 each	____
pronoun agreement, subject, verb agreement, capitalization -1 each	____

Organization & Content +	____
Mechanics & Usage -	____
Total	____
Rewrite Points	____
Total	____

Arrangement of Information - headings (5); spacing & setting off of dates and other information (10); placing of sections (5); correct chronological order(5). 25____

Content - All necessary information concisely presented (10) Descriptive material emphasizes particular job qualifications(15). 25____

Total 50____

D = 45-50
P = 40-44

Comments:

EVALUATION FORM

Letters

Mechanics & Usage		Organization & Content	+
punctuation & spelling -5 each	_____		
fragments & run-ons -5 each	_____	Mechanics & Usage	-
diction, awkward phrasing, parallelism -3 each	_____	Total	_____
pronoun agreement, subject, verb agreement, capitalization -1 each	_____	Rewrite Points	_____
		Total	

Organization & Content:

1. Correct Format - including appropriate punctuation, spacing, and placement 15 _____

2. Paragraph Content:
   A. Purpose clearly stated in introductory paragraph 5 _____
   B. Purpose clearly and completely supported in body paragraph 10 _____
   C. Purpose clearly concluded (concluding paragraph) (good will or action statement) 5 _____

3. Paragraph and sentence conciseness 10 _____

4. Appropriate tone - avoids negative, accusing or statements and inappropriate jargon and cliches. Sentences have appropriate emphasis and variety. 5 _____

Comments:

D = 45-50
P = 40-44

mjr

INTERVIEW EVALUATION FORM

Relevant 5	
Open Ended 5	
Tactfully Worded 5	
Short 5	
Memorized 5	
Preparation 10	
Suited for Character 5	
Dressed Appropriately 5	
Established friendly attitude 5	
Maintained poise 5	
Vitality 10	
Listened well 10	
Articulated clearly & projected well 5	
Effective body action 10	
Organization 5	
Achieved purpose 5	

Total _____

below 80 = R
80-89 = P
90-100 = D

mjr
1/14/77